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SEP 25 2006

Amendments to the Claims

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A surgical needle which comprises:
a base portion having a root diameter; and
a tapered end portion extending from said base portion to a pointed end, the tapered end portion defining at least a first and second region, ~~wherein~~ the first region having an average taper ratio of approximately 2.76:1 and the second region having an average taper ratio of approximately 5.65:1.
2. (Original) The surgical needle according to claim 1 wherein the first region incorporates a length which is approximately 1/5 of the overall length of the tapered end portion.
3. (Currently Amended) A surgical needle, which comprises:
an elongated needle member including a base portion having a root diameter and a needle end portion extending to a needle tip, the needle end portion defining a non-linear tapered configuration and being devoid of edges, the needle end portion defining a first region adjacent the needle tip and a second region adjacent the first region, the first region having an average taper ratio less than about ~~4:1~~ 3:1, the second region having an average taper ratio less than about ~~42:1~~ 6:1.

Claims 4-7 (Canceled)

8. (Previously Presented) The surgical needle according to claim 3 wherein the first region incorporates a length which is at least about 1/5 of the overall length of the tapered end portion.

9. (Previously Presented) The surgical needle according to claim 3 wherein the needle end portion defines a general parabolic configuration.

10. (Currently Amended) A surgical needle, which comprises:
an elongated needle member including a base portion having a root diameter and a needle end portion extending to a needle tip, the needle end portion being devoid of an edge and defining a first region adjacent the needle tip and a second region adjacent the first region, the first region having an average taper ratio of less than about 3:1 and the second region having an average taper ratio of less than about 6:1.

11. (Previously Presented) The surgical needle according to claim 10 wherein the needle end portion defines a non-linear tapered configuration.

12. (Previously Presented) The surgical needle according to claim 10 wherein the needle tip is pointed.